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NO FUNCTIONAL HOSPITALS LEFT IN NORTHERN GAZA, WARNS W.H.O.

The UN health agency said it led missions to two of the worst-hit hospitals, Al-Shifa and Al-Ahli, both of which are located in northern Gaza Strip

MONTHS-LONG WAIT FOR SURGERIES

Of Gaza's 36 hospitals, only nine are partially functional, all of them in the south, the WHO said. Al-Ahli, which just two days ago was overwhelmed with patients seeking emergency care, is now "a shell of a hospital", the WHO mission found. There are injured people waiting for over a month for surgeries and others who have started developing post-operative infections

WEAPONS FOUND INSIDE SCHOOL, SAYS IDF

- The Israel Defence Forces said it bombed 230 targets in Gaza on Thursday, including a rocket launch site and a compound in the southern city of Khan Younis, while ground forces found weapons inside a school in Jabalia | P12
- The UN human rights office said it got reports that Israeli troops summarily executed at least 11 unarmed Palestinians in a possible war crime in Gaza City

20,000

PEOPLE KILLED IN GAZA STRIP, SAYS ITS HAMAS-CONTROLLED HEALTH MINISTRY

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

MLA, 49 others 'grab' ₹11K cr forest land in B'luru: RTI

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

A senior MLA is among the 50 people who have encroached upon reserve forest land worth Rs 11,000 crore in Bengaluru North taluk.

According to information obtained through an RTI application, the MLA alone has encroached around 5.5 acres of forest land worth Rs 324 crore. The land has a lawn of 60,000 sqft, a helipad and other lavish facilities. Official records accessed by *TNIE* revealed that the property of the MLA off the new Airport Road still bears the name, "Jakkur Plantation", the original name of the reserve forest in the records. The Mysore Gazette dated September 26, 1940, shows 177 acres and 28 guntas as reserve forest land bearing survey numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 at Jakkur Allalasandra in Bengaluru North taluk.

When contacted the MLA said, "It is all clean and neat. We are not aware. The high court has decided that it is not forest land. Apartments have been built and prominent personalities live there."

When the forest department sought records from revenue officials, the special tahsildar pointed out that most of them had been destroyed. The ACF, who pursued this case, was issued a notice. Part of this land has also been encroached by two businessmen, who are brothers. They have 13,05,000 sqft of land worth Rs 19,57,50,00,000. P4

Yuva Nidhi

Beneficiaries to get financial aid from Jan 12

As K'taka govt is all set to launch Yuva Nidhi guarantee scheme on December 26, Minister Sharan Prakash Patil announced the beneficiaries will get financial assistance under the scheme from January 12, 2024 | P4

CM Siddaramaiah addresses reporters after the Covid-19 TAC meeting, in Bengaluru on Thursday. DyCM DK Shivakumar and Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara look on

Cabinet sub-panel to take crucial decisions to contain Covid-19

It will coordinate with health experts and TAC members, says CM Siddaramaiah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Thursday that the State Government has decided to set up a cabinet sub-committee to coordinate with health experts and take crucial decisions to contain the spread of Covid-19.

After chairing a high-level meeting with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, Medical Education Minister Dr Sharan Prakash Patil, members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and other officials, the chief minister said there is no need to panic now and the new variant, JN.1, is a sub-variant of Omicron, which was active in the past. However, people must strictly follow Covid-19 guidelines.

Siddaramaiah further said the sub-committee members will meet frequently. It will also be in constant touch with TAC members.

Stressing the need for proper coordination between the sub-committee and TAC, he said the suggestions given by TAC should be implemented in toto.

He said the sub-committee will take a decision on the fees for Covid-19 tests in private hospitals and look into the proposals for purchase of medicines and equipment to combat the virus. Besides, it will also take a decision on whether to supply free vaccines and make masks mandatory for schoolchildren.

Reminding the health officials of the past mistakes, Siddaramaiah directed them to ensure that hospitals face no shortage of oxygen, ventilators, beds and medicines and asked them to follow the suggestions given by TAC. As a preventive measure, he asked them to store vaccines instead of waiting for supply from the Union Government.

Referring to the rising Covid cases and the recent three deaths in the State, Siddaramaiah said some have been hospitalised. They also have other comorbidities too. It cannot be said that they (three persons) died due to Covid-19. They had other comorbidities or diseases related to kidney, heart, lungs, BP and diabetes along with Covid-19. P3

Advisory to schools

Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka issued an advisory to private schools in the state. In a letter, it said students should mask up, schools should start temperature checks, sanitise premises

ONE-SIDED WIN FOR SANJAY SINGH; FORMER OLYMPIC MEDALLIST QUITS IN PROTEST

Brij Bhushan aide elected, appalled Sakshi retires

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

AS the year approaches its end, the wrestling saga has culminated with elections of the Wrestling Federation of India on Thursday. It took just over eleven months but the results, however, was not as sweet for the protesting wrestlers.

Even as supporters of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh shouted slogans and burst firecrackers at his residence which serves as Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) office, to celebrate their victory in the elections, less than two kilometres from there one of India's most decorated woman wrestlers announced her retirement.

More than an hour earlier, Sanjay Kumar Singh, a staunch supporter of Brij Bhushan, was elected the WFI president after securing 40 out of 47 votes to beat Anita Sheoran, a former CWG medallist.

Teary-eyed Sakshi Malik, the lone woman wrestler from the country to win an Olympic medal to date, placed her shoes on the table while announcing her decision at the Press Club of India. She along with Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia and multiple World Championships medallist Vinesh Phogat were the face of the protest against the former WFI chief Brij Bhushan on sexual harassment charges and mismanagement.

"We fought from our heart but if a man like Brij Bhushan, his business partner and a close aide has been elected as the president of WFI, then I quit wrestling," Sakshi told reporters with Bajrang and Vinesh in her company. "We wanted a female president but that did not happen," the 31-year-old said. Unable to control her emotions, a sobbing Sakshi left the venue soon after. The announcement marked an end to her illustrious career of more than a decade wherein she bagged bronze in the 2016 Rio Games apart from winning medals of all colours at the Commonwealth Games. The gold came last year when she made a dramatic comeback in the final, which also turned out to be her last international outing.

Bajrang felt let down by the government. "It's unfortunate that government did not stand by its word that no Brij Bhushan loyalist will contest the WFI elections," he said during the press conference.

As far as the elections were concerned, the faction of Brij Bhushan, who was ineligible to contest as he had completed three full tenures, won 13 out of 15 posts. As was reported by this daily in July, a compromise formula was devised apparently at the behest of the union government as candidates from other faction — Prem Chand Lochab, former secretary of the Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB), and Devender Kadyan, a hotelier from Haryana — won the elections for secretary general and senior vice-president's posts respectively.

Meanwhile, Brij Bhushan after the victory said that no vendetta politics will be played. "There will be no partiality. All will get support from WFI," Brij Bhushan, also a BJP Member of Parliament, told a news agency when asked if the federation will support the wrestlers who had launched protests. "We have to look after the game and not the mistakes of the wrestlers," he assured. P17

Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh (second left) with his loyalist Sanjay Singh (third left), the newly-elected WFI president, on Thursday | PARVEEN NEGI

We were demanding a female president. If there is a female president there will be no exploitation but today not a single woman is there in the new governing body

Sakshi Malik at the press conference

AD HOC COMMITTEE DECISIONS CANCELLED

With a new regime in the offing, changes were on the cards. And it happened within hours after Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's faction won 13 out of 15 posts. The new panel during the emergency general meeting decided to cancel all the decisions taken by the ad-hoc committee.

EXPRESS READ

TN min sentenced to 3 yrs in jail in corruption case

CHENNAI: In a DA case, the Madras HC on Thursday sentenced TN Minister K Ponmudy to 3 years in prison under the Prevention of Corruption Act and slapped a fine of Rs 50 lakh on him. Ponmudy stands disqualified as a legislator and as a result ceases to be a minister. P5

15 killed in mass shooting at Prague university

PRAGUE: A gunman opened fire on Thursday in a university building in Prague, killing at least 15 in the Czech Republic's worst mass shooting. The bloodshed took place in the philosophy department of Charles University, where the shooter was a student. The suspected gunman also died P12

4 soldiers martyred, 3 hurt in J&K ambush

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

FOUR soldiers were killed and three others injured after militants ambushed two army vehicles at Dera ki Gali (DKG) in the border district of Rajouri in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday around 4 pm.

Army sources said the militants fired at the army vehicles indiscriminately using automatic weapons. "The fire was returned by the troops. In the militant attack, three soldiers were killed and three injured," an official said.

According to the Army official, the soldiers were moving towards the DKG area, where troops had launched an intelligence based operation on Wednesday evening. "The troops were going to reinforce the joint operation when they were ambushed by the militants," he said.

Immediately after the attack, the joint contingent of Army and police rushed to the area and launched a massive search operation to track down the militants responsible for the ambush. Army used helicopters, quadcopters and sniffer dogs during the search operation to track down the location of militants to pinpoint them. Para-commandos also joined the operation to assist the troops on the ground.

This is the second major encounter in the border district of Rajouri within a month.

On November 23, five soldiers and two Lashkar-e-Taiba militants including a Pakistani national were killed in a two-day long encounter.

An Army vehicle that was ambushed by terrorists at Dera ki Gali on Thursday | PTI

CISF to take full charge of Parliament security

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR, BALA CHAUHAN & FIROZ ROZINDAR
@ New Delhi / Bengaluru / Bagalkot

THE Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which guards the country's airports and other vital establishments, will soon take over the security of the Parliament building complex. Sources said the CISF will conduct a comprehensive survey of the entire complex from Friday to assess the security measures in place.

The CISF will be in charge of access control to the new and old Parliament complex. Entry will be subject to frisking and screening with hand-held detectors, and personal belongings will be checked through X-ray machines. Sources said shoes, heavy jackets, and belts may also be scanned.

Earlier, frisking of visitors to Parliament complex was done by Delhi Police.

"The plan is to ensure 100% security to both the new and old Parliament complexes and all other subsidiary buildings through a comprehensive security cover by the CISF, which will also have the existing elements of Parliament Security Service, the Delhi Police, and the Parliament Duty Group of the CRPF," said a source.

Trained CISF commandos will be deployed for frisking and spotting suspects.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police sleuths have detained a software engineer from Karnataka's Bagalkot for questioning in the December 13 Parliament breach case. Sai Krishna Jagali, 30, son of a retired DySP, is a friend of D Manoranjan, one of the accused. His name was found in Manoranjan's diary.

Accused Manoranjan D being produced at the Patiala House Court on Thursday | PTI

Bagalkot Superintendent of Police Amarnath Reddy said Sai Krishna was picked up from his house in Bagalkot on Wednesday night. He has not been arrested so far.

On Thursday, a Delhi court extended the police custody of the four accused — Manoranjan, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad — till January 5.

IT SECTOR TO COME UNDER THE LABOUR DEPT'S AMBIT

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

ALLEGED unfair trade practices in the information technology (IT)/information technology enabled services (ITeS) sector have led to the State Government to contemplate bringing companies in this segment in Karnataka under the ambit of state labour department.

Several cases of alleged unfair practices in several IT/ITeS companies, like arbitrary termination, ID blockage, mass retrenchment, sexual harassment, and increase in working hours, have come to the notice of the labour department, said Additional Labour Commissioner Dr G Manjunath, who pointed out that they have referred those cases to the labour and industrial courts.

The IT/ITeS firms have been given an exemption from the Karnataka Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act 1946 over many years as they were considered 'sunrise industries'. It was extended for five years on May 21, 2019. But now, the government is thinking of not continuing the same and bringing those companies under the department's purview to protect the interests of those working in such companies.

In Karnataka, nearly 18 lakh people work in 8,785 IT/ITES firms. Post-Covid, many such cases of unfair labour practice have been registered with the department and it is necessary to enforce the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act 1946 to effectively resolve such grievances and provide job security to those working in the sector, the officer said. P4

KIA T2 gets UNESCO recognition, wins spl prize for interiors

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE much-acclaimed Terminal 2 of Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) has received UNESCO's recognition as one of the world's most beautiful airports and has bagged a coveted special prize for its interiors.

A press release issued here stated that the recognition and the 'World Special Prize for an Interior 2023' were announced at UNESCO's 2023 Prix Versailles. "Bengaluru airport is the only Indian airport to receive this esteemed recognition, highlighting its commitment towards exceptional design and architecture on a global scale," the release said.

The world judges' panel for the event was chaired by renowned fashion designer Elie Saab.

Hari Marar, MD & CEO of Bangalore International Airport Limited, said, "The nomination of Terminal 2 for the 2023 Prix Versailles Award is a moment of immense pride and we are pleased to see the terminal receiving the recognition it deserves."

T2, called a "Terminal in a Garden", was inaugurated on November 11, 2022, and can accommodate 25 million passengers annually in its first phase. Encompassing 255,661 square metres, the terminal structure is crafted with engineered bamboo and its interiors offer a contemporary yet classic ambience, the release said.

The terminal also features a spacious indoor garden with waterfalls and hanging planted bells enhancing its aesthetics.

Prix Versailles, established in 2015, focuses on "intelligent sustainability" as a cultural driver, acknowledging innovation, creativity, reflection of local heritage, ecological efficiency, and values of social interaction.